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Working Profile: Richard N. Perle

The Bureaucratic Maneuverers' Outmaneuverer

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WASHINGTON, May 2— It was the fiercest Pentagon turf battle in years. When the smoke had cleared last February, Richard N. Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense for international security policy, had Pentagon Directive 2040.2 safely tucked in his pocket.

Signed by Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, the directive gave Mr. Perle's office the final say in shaping the Pentagon's technical advice to the State Department on the export of military helicopters, tanks, incendiary agents, nerve gas, space electronics and other munitions.

Previously the expertise had come from the office of Richard D. DeLauer, Under Secretary for research and engineering. Soon after the directive was signed, Mr. DeLauer was telling Congressional aides that he planned to quit this summer. He declined comment to a reporter on his struggle with Mr. Perle.

The San Andreas Fault

In power-sensitive Washington, shifts in the structure of bureaucratic command are akin to earthquakes.

In a 15-year career in the capital, Mr. Perle, working quietly, tirelessly, always somewhere below the tectonic plates, has become, in the view of many, Washington's closest equivalent to the San Andreas Fault.

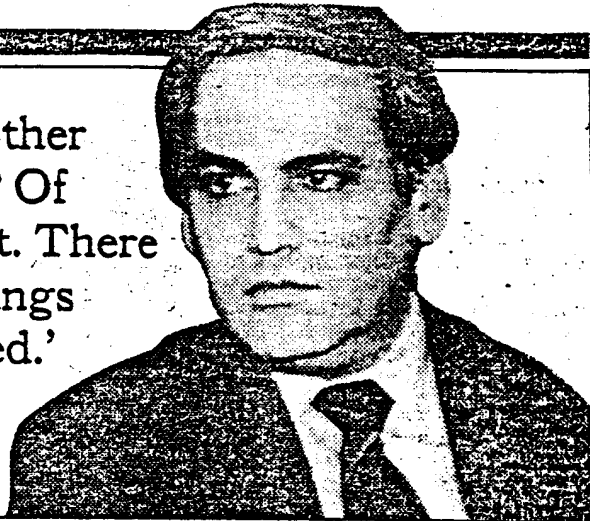
As national security adviser to Senator Henry M. Jackson, he was the chief author of the 1979 Export Administration Act, which gave the President sweeping powers to control exports to the Soviet Union, such as the pipeline equipment that President Reagan barred in 1982.

Both houses of Congress in a legislative conference committee are now hotly contesting amendments that would modify some of that authority.

Mr. Perle and Senator Jackson, the Washington State Democrat who died last Sept. 1 after 30 years in Congress, were the key figures in the Senate's 1979 rejection of the arms treaty with the Soviet Union.

In 1974 Mr. Perle and Senator Jackson, along with Charles A. Vanik, Democrat of Ohio, legislated a link between emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union and economic concessions by the United States. Moscow refused to accept any conditions, and relations between the two countries began a long slide downhill.

'Am I another
Rasputin? Of
course not. There
are no strings
to be pulled.'



Woodfin Camp/Wally McNamee

Richard N. Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense.

The 42-year-old Mr. Perle is from Los Angeles, where his father, the son of Russian Jewish émigrés, operated a textile business.

As a bright, shy student at Hollywood High School and the University of Southern California, he gained a reputation as a left-winger. And he is considered by many in and out of the bureaucracy today as the archetypal hardliner, resisting accommodation with Moscow and stressing military strength. He is also known as a strong supporter of Israel who has repeatedly made the case for increased aid in Administration circles.

After graduate studies at Princeton and the London School of Economics, work at Westinghouse and a lobbying campaign he undertook for the anti-missile missile, he met Senator Jackson and was promptly hired by him.

In an interview Mr. Perle said that his interest in East-West trade issues sprang from conversations he had with Russian Jewish emigrants while working for Senator Jackson in the early 1970's.

"Among the scientists and engineers who came over, it surprised me how dependent they said they were on Western technology," he said. "A lot of them said their facilities would have had to shut down if they hadn't gotten Western test equipment."

Under the Tent of Two Rivals

"The United States cannot hope to match the Soviet Union tank for tank because of the roughly three-to-one advantage held by the Russians. But we make up for it in technology. If we share that technology with the Russians so that they get the same level of military effectiveness, then that three-to-one advantage is decisive."

While pressing these views, Mr. Perle has managed to enlarge his turf, not only by besting Mr. DeLauer inside the Pentagon but also by getting his nose under the tent of two rivals across the river.

These are Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige and his Under Secretary for international trade, Lionel H. Olmer, who are responsible for licensing strategic exports that are not on the "munitions" list.

Mr. Perle and Mr. Weinberger got the President to sign an order giving the Pentagon, for the first time, the authority to advise Commerce on exports to non-Communist countries.

The idea is to prevent diversion of high-powered computers, laser instruments and other sensitive high technology to the Soviet Union from such countries as Austria, Sweden or West Germany.

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